

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 RANGOO 00510 190807Z
ACTION EA-06

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R 190600Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBSSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBSSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING

S E C R E T RANGOON 0510

STADIS////////////////////////////////

LIMDIS

FOR EA ONLY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, US, XB
SUBJ: SRV'S PEACEFUL (?) ORIENTATION

REF: (A) VIENTIANE 0322, (B) RANGOON 0437

1. HAVING READ AND CONSIDERED THE INFORMATION CITED IN REFTEL (A),
AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT ITS VERY ROUNDABOUT ORIGINS, I STILL
INCLINE TO THE VIEW THAT THE EASTERN EUROPEANS (FOR REASONS OF
THEIR OWN) WOULD LIKE AS THEIR MAIN POLICY LINE IN SEA
TO SEE VIETNAM BASE ITS DRIVE FOR REGION-WIDE INFLUENCE ON THE
APPEAL OF SUCCESSFUL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION AT

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HOME, RATHER THAN ON DIRECT OR INDIRECT MILITARY CONQUEST,
AND THAT VIETNAM'S CURRENT ORIENTATION (FOR REASONS OF
VIETNAMESE SELF-INTEREST) COINCIDES WITH SUCHA POLICY LINE.
THE INFORMATION CITED IN REFTEL (A) DOES NOT AT ANY RATE
SEEM TO ME ADEQUATE TO SUPPORT THE CONTRARY THESIS THAT
VIETNAM'S MAIN CURRENT ORIENTATION IS TOWARD MILITARY CONQUEST
OF THE REGION (OR ITS MAINLAND PORTION) AND THAT VIETNAM ENJOYS

THE SUPPORT OF THE EASTERN BLOC IN THIS ORIENTATION.

2. IF I SAT WHERE TOM CORCORAN SITS, I WOULD PROBABLY HAVE A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT PRESPECTIVE. MAYBE THE BURMA VIEWPOINT IS TOO RELATIVISTIC, BUT SOME OF BURMA'S NEIGHBORS, GENERALLY REGARDED BY THE U.S. AS CURRENTLY PEACEABLE, HAVE PROBABLY BEEN THE SOURCE OF MORE ENCOURAGEMENT, ARMS, TRAINING, AND/OR REAR-ECHELON SUPPORT FOR BURMA'S VARIOUS ARMED INSURGENCIES THAN THE THAI INSURGENTS ARE RECEIVING (SO FAR, ANYWAY) FROM OR VIA LAOS. I SAY THIS NOT TO EXCUSE THE VIETNAMESE AND LAOTIANS, BUT TO SUGGEST THAT BY ONE MEASURE(NAMELY, WHAT A COUNTRY CAN CONTAIN THROUGH RELIANCE ON ITS OWN SEVERELY LIMITED RESOURCES) THE RELATIVE DEGREE OF VIETNAM'S DEVIATION FROM A PEACEABLE ORIENTATION MAY BE REGARDED AS TOLERABLE. BURMA'S EXPERIENCE SUGGESTS ALSO THAT A POSTURE OF ASSUMING THAT THE EXTERNAL SUPPORTERS OF AN INSURGENT GROUP WILL ACCEPT THE VERDICT OF THE BATTLEFIELD, AND DOGGEDLY PURSUING, ON THAT BASIS, THE MILITARY EXTERMINATION OF THE INSURGENTS, IS AT LEAST A FEASIBLE APPROACH, AND PERHAPS BETTER, IN THE LONG RUN, THAN DEPENDING ON OTHERS.

3. ANOTHER RELATIVISTIC MEASURE IN TERMS OF WHICH TO ASSESS VIETNAM'S DEGREE OF DIVERGENCE FROM A PEACEABLE ORIENTATION, AND ONE WHICH IS STILL MORE PERTINENT TO OUR BASIC DISCUSSION, IS THAT OF IMPLICATIONS FOR UNITED STATES POLICY. BY THIS MEASURE, VIETNAM MAY BE REGARDED AS ON A RELATIVELY PEACEABLE COURSE IF IT IS NOT ENGAGED IN OR HEADED TOWARD ACTIONS LIKELY TO FACE US WITH A REQUIREMENT FOR A FORMAL DETERMAINATION UNDER ARTICLE IV OF THE MANILA TREATY. IN THIS CONNECTION, I WOULD
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SUGGEST THAT THE OPERATIVE DEFINITION OF "ARMED ATTACK" HAS PROBABLY BEEN TIGHTENED CONSIDERABLY AS A RESULT OF RECENT AMERICAN EXPERIENCE, TO THE POINT WHERE THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE SIZEABLE UNITS OF FOREIGN FORCES INVOLVED IN DIRECT ACTION IN ORDER TO QUALIFY UNDER ARTICLE IV. I COULD OF COURSE BE WRONG IN ESTIMATING THAT NEITHER THE SRV NOR ITS EAST EUROPEAN BACKERS INTEND MATTERS TO GO THAT FAR; HOWEVER, THE INFICATIONS CITED IN REFTTEL (A) DO NOT PROVE ME WRONG.

4. IT WAS ON THE BASIS OF MY OPTIMISTIC ESTIMATE OF SRV INTENTIONS THAT I RECOMMENDED (RANGOON'S 0437) A RELAXED, NON-URGENT U.S. APPROACH TO NORMALIZING RELATIONS WITH THE SRV, ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE SRV AND ITS BACKERS WERE ALREADY MOTIVATED TOWARD PEACEFUL CONSTRUCTION, SPARING US THE NEED TO HOLD OUT ANY EXTRA CARROTS IN THE FORM OF AID. I ALSO RECOMMENDED THAT WE RETAIN SOME PROJECTABLE MILITARY POWER IN THE REGION, IF THE PRICE WAS AT ALL REASONABLE, INASMUCH AS MY OPTIMISTIC ESTIMATE RESTED IN PART UPON THE ASSUMPTION OF AVAILABILITY OF U.S. MILITARY FORCE IN THE REGION. TO THE

EXTENT THAT WE ARE GOING TO ADOPT A MORE PESSIMISTIC ESTIMATE OF SRV INTENTIONS, I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD (A) HOLD OUT MORE CARROTS, AND (B) BE WILLING TO PAY A HIGHER PRICE FOR A BIGGER MILITARY STICK. I WOULD STILL FEEL THAT EITHER THE PROVISION OF INCENTIVES SUFFICIENT TO DEFLECT A SRV DRIVE TO CONQUER MAINLAND SEA (IF THAT'S REALLY RELEVANT AND EFFECTIVE MILITARY PRESENCE FOR THE SAME PURPOSE, WOULD BE INORDINATELY EXPENSIVE EVEN IF FEASIBLE. BUT OF THE TWO, CARROTS WOULD BE CHEAPER, SO MAYBE WE SHOULD BECOME MORE URGENT ABOUT NORMALIZING RELATIONS.

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